



# Interagency Critical Incident Peer Support

## Peer Supporter Roles and Responsibilities

### Who is a Peer or “Person of Mutual Respect?”

A peer is an individual with a professional history, often having historic recognition for background and experience within the “culture” of the wildland fire community who has a willingness to assist others in times of crisis. Peers come from all different aspects of the wildland fire community; dispatch, aviation, direct suppression crews or modules, engines and fire and aviation managers. The best peers are individuals who share the same backgrounds; i.e., engine personnel to engine personnel. A peer to a firefighter on a hotshot or veterans crew for example, would have substantial (and preferably current) experience on the fireline and within the hotshot/veterans crew community.

A Critical Incident Peer Support (CIPS) Group member is a highly respected and trusted fire person from any of the different organizations or specific functions within the national fire program. A Peer Support Group member is someone from an agency’s fire program who has volunteered to take the training required to support impacted individuals with information and assist Licensed Mental Health Care Clinicians (Trauma Specialists) in the delivery of various crisis intervention protocols (defusing, crisis management briefing, one-on-one support, etc.). A Peer Supporter completes training, assists with new trainees, and assists with the continuing overall program development and enhancements when possible.

Peer Supporters are required to keep confidences, are committed to the program and adhere to ethics and conduct regulations. A Peer Support should never operate outside of the established Boundaries of Competence or Standard of Care established by the [National Interagency Peer Support Program](#). They are the main service providers in conjunction with Mental Health Care Clinicians.

### Specific Roles and Responsibilities of Peer Supporters



#### Training and Experience Requirements

- Successful completion of the [International Critical Incident Stress Foundation’s](#) Assisting Individuals and Groups in Crisis Course.

There are no “trainee” assignments per se for Peer Supporters. The CIPS Group Leader will take your experience level into account when making assignments and work with you to ensure you are successful in your position.

#### Confidentiality and Trust

All interagency CIPS personnel are required to maintain the highest levels of confidentiality and integrity. Those impacted by a traumatic/critical incident may find it difficult to open up and express themselves to those they do not trust, respect, or find credibility with. All interagency CIPS members must work to maintain themselves worthy of trust, both on assignment and in their professional day to day jobs. Peers who are trustworthy, and demonstrate integrity and respect in what they do are the key element to assisting individuals in crisis.



## Critical Incident Peer Support Response Roles

- Assist the CIPS Group Leader and Clinician in providing Crisis Management Briefings, Defusing's, Debriefings, One-on-One Support and information sharing as directed.
- Assist the CIPS Group Leader and Clinician in setting up and organizing formal meetings (location, seating, refreshments, assembling resource information and literature to be available at debriefings, etc.).
- Be self-sufficient (Travel Card or Credit Card).
- For peers of fireline personnel, you are required to have all of your required PPE to meet with affected personnel on the fireline, in spike camps and other remote locations.
- Prior to the arrival of the CIPS Group Leader you may be called on to initiate contact with local managers and staff to explain the peer support program, gather information and coordinate logistics.
- Prior to the arrival of the CIPS Group Leader you may be called to meet informally with those affected or involved with the critical incident. You will be asked to estimate the number of persons involved, make a personal assessment to the CIPS Group Lead of the impacts on the local unit (and other units involved or affected) and prepare (answer process questions) that may be asked.

### Peer Support Group Member Selection Criteria

- Able to deal with ambiguous situations.
- Area of expertise is Wildland Fire and Aviation.
- Red Card Qualifications.
- May have historic recognition in the wildland fire community.
- Ability to lead during adverse, chaotic and crisis situations.
- Possess and routinely applies analytical skills.
- Communicates in concise but caring manner.
- Decisive.
- Firm but flexible.
- Learns quickly and easily.
- Reputation as a "good listener."
- Observant of behavior and processes.
- Persuasive without being overbearing.
- Sensitive to nuances of situations of people.
- Consistently manages stress effectively.
- Able to identify teaching moments.
- Experience negotiating successfully.

### Code of Ethics

Certified Peer Supporters will maintain high standards of personal conduct. Individual Peer Supporters must excuse themselves or the Critical Incident Response Coordinator shall not designate or assign any peer supporter if the following conditions exist.

The Peer Supporter has:

- Played a significant role in the event.
- Has direct command or supervisory authority over any employee involved in the event.
- Close friends affected by the incident.
- Works with the affected group on a regular basis.
- The potential to become involved as any part of any internal investigative body.
- A close relative of any affected employee.

Peer Supporters will:

- At all times respect the rights and dignity of their Peer Support Group members and those they serve.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of those they serve.
- Not enter into dual relationships or commitments that conflict with the interests they serve (Human Resources Specialist also functioning in a CISM role.

